

*With the Bishop's
kind regards.*

A CHARGE TO THE CLERGY

OF THE

Diocese of Fredericton,

BY

JOHN,

BISHOP OF FREDERICTON AND METROPOLITAN OF CANADA,

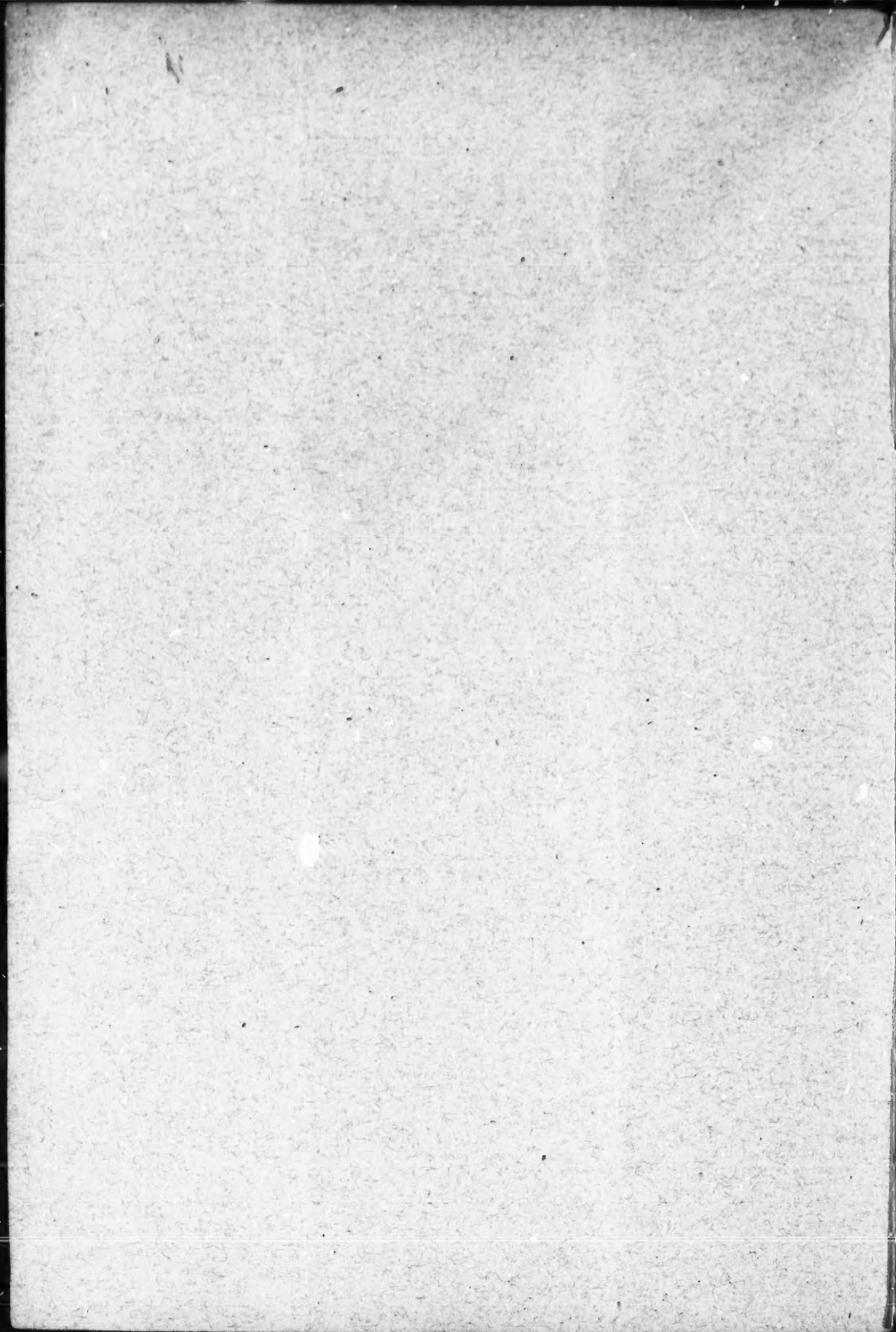
AT HIS

TRIENNIAL VISITATION, ST. PETER'S DAY, 1886.

Published by request of the Clergy present.

SAINT JOHN, N. B.
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DELIVERED IN TRINITY CHURCH, ST. JOHN,

To the Clergy of the Diocese of Fredericton;

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CHARGE TO THE CLERGY.

REVEREND AND DEAR BRETHREN :

BEING permitted by the mercy of God to address you once more on a triennial visitation, it is my pleasure as well as my duty to speak to you as one who is "Saved by Hope." It would be idle to attempt to conceal from you our difficulties, but it is on every account desirable to take the most hopeful view of our position. If we were a very rich Church, in times of great worldly prosperity, I could not have the same hope. Or, if we were striving to make the Church a clerical club, from which the laity were rigidly excluded, to the support of which they contributed neither money, nor influence, nor time, nor diligence, nor patience, nor prayer, I should have but little hope; or if we were so misguided as to throw all our weight into the upholding one political party, I should have less hope. For the Church was never founded by a party in the State. It never throve on politics, and it was never in a less hopeful condition than when its richest benefices were the ill-earned reward of active and unscrupulous political partizans. My hope for the Church in Canada, of which we are members and ministers, is not that we are so numerous as to control the State; nor that we are so rich as to dispense with the contributions of our members; but that, being (as without arrogance we may consider ourselves) a branch of that Church which came to us from the ages past, which no storms of persecution have destroyed, and none of the manifold changes of the world have shaken, we still hope to hand down to our children the truth of God which is indestructible; and though comparatively poor, we labor to make many rich, "content with such things as we have," and seeking the good will and the assistance of all our Brethren. It is hopeful, therefore, to look back fifty years, and see what the resources of the Church were then and what they are now; what the number of our communicants was then and what they are now; what the contributions of the laity were then and what they are now; what the number of our clergy and the frequency of our services was then and what they are now; what the appearance of our Church was then and what it is now. It

is pleasant to find that we are not despairing because the grant of £3,000 sterling, from home, has been reduced to £1,250, and will be reduced still further, and that we are bracing up our energies to meet and overcome the difficulty.

It is pleasant to find so much interest generally taken in the Sunday Schools, and in increasing the knowledge of the Bible and of the Church, among those who teach in Sunday Schools, though our returns from the clergy are not yet complete. Our examinations for holy orders are more strict, and our clergy have access to theological libraries in their several deaneries. Above all it is a ground of hope when we find the clergy rising to a higher standard of knowledge and of duty, recognizing the blessing of more constant prayer, more frequent communion, and giving more opportunities to their flocks to unite with them in the blessed and heavenly work of prayer and praise.

It is delightful to find that this is done with the zealous and active concurrence of their lay brethren, who seldom fail to respond to the joyful invitation, and turn the feast days of the Church into occasions of earnest intercessions, abundant alms giving, attentive hearing, spiritual communion, and heartfelt thanksgiving to God. In such services it has been my pleasure to mingle, and as long as I have strength, my countenance and support will never be wanting to them. Nor ought I to be backward to acknowledge the active and energetic assistance which has been given by the Bishop Coadjutor to every object that I have named, many which would have failed to receive due support by physical inability on my part to perform all the increasing work of the Diocese. Such are some of the grounds of my hope; but it would not be a true statement were I to disguise the magnitude of the task which lies before us.

The financial prosperity of our Church is owing in a great measure to the active and unpaid support of our laity. To their assistance we owe its present condition, and we look to them for continued and increased care and diligence. But there is no reasonable doubt that our subscription-lists do not manifest any general amount of self-denial. They might be doubled in many instances without hardship. At the same time it is gratifying to see that larger donations come from missions which have less ability to give than they had many years ago, and that for the most part the assessment which is imposed as a necessity is cheerfully and ungrudgingly paid. We

look forward with hope to the time when, by the increased support given to our Diocesan Church Society, the general interest taken by every layman in his own parish and mission, and the aid of moderate endowments, arising from benefactions of the living, or the bequests of those who are called to give account of their stewardship, we may become with unqualified satisfaction to ourselves and to others an entirely self-sustaining Church.

But I gladly turn to that advice which it is my duty to give you as a body of clergy whom God has given into my care. We must thankfully acknowledge that we are spared the trials which fell upon the clergy in former times. But your Bishop is, I hope, the last man who would underrate or fail to sympathize with the trials of the clergy in our own day; yet perhaps the smallness and uncertainty of clerical incomes is not the greatest of the trials of a priest. From one serious trouble, the expense of outfit when he enters on the work of a mission, the missionary is to a certain extent released, or at all events he is greatly assisted, by the loan of \$250 made by the Church Society without interest, to be repaid in moderate sums. With occasional donations granted by loving parishioners, and due care and forethought, a clergyman, if he be prudent, may keep out of debt. But only if he be prudent. Those who engage in early marriages before they have earned anything for their own support, and those who indulge in unnecessary expenses, cannot, on our limited incomes, keep out of debt. And debt is demoralizing as well as depressing. It is sure to lead to borrowing, and borrowing often supposes heavy interest, and interest supposes shifts and contrivances and all manner of uncomfortable practices, a doubtful morality and a heavy heart. To the younger clergy I unhesitatingly say, it is your duty not to marry until from your own income you have laid by something towards the maintenance of your household and the comfort of those who reasonably look to you for support. For the greater part of those who begin life in debt carry it on to the end, and harass their own minds and the minds of others by want of prudence at an early period. But after all, is not the greatest trial of a clergyman's life in himself? We who are called by the Church to the office and work of priests in the Church of God, who do not shrink from the awful responsibility of the message committed by our Lord to His Apostles, and through them conveyed to us, had need often to ponder in our hearts the words which no subtlety of

reasoning can explain away: "Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a priest in the Church of God." We know that they are the Lord's own words, which the Church uses because they are His, and because the promise is given us of His presence with us "all days, even to the end of the world." We know that not the Bishop, but the Bishop's Lord and Master, can alone bestow this or any other spiritual gift. We know that this is given by the channel of a human instrument, because it pleases Him to work by human means, and to employ "earthen vessels." We know that the gift which the Lord bestows to render our ministry valid, and His sacraments effectual means of grace, is not to be confounded with the personal sanctification of the priest, which must be sought for by him as it is sought for by every Christian—by humble and constant prayer and diligent use of all the means of grace. But, on the other hand, he to whom the Church says, "Receive," must believe that the Church has wherewithal to give. And that this gift is the gift of the Holy Ghost for the effectual discharge of our ministrations is evident, for from the Spirit of God "every good and perfect gift" proceeds, and surely that gift which is bestowed on us "for the perfecting of the saints and the work of the ministry." When we have ourselves desired this office, when the Church, after due examination, has bestowed it upon us, when the Church calls us priests and our order a priesthood, it were an act of ingratitude and of cowardice to be ashamed of the name when we use the office. None of us taketh this "honor unto himself but he that was called of God, as was Aaron," and yet Aaron's priesthood was disputed. Aaron himself was "compassed with infirmity." "The people made the calf, *which Aaron made.*" And, in that great miracle, when water issued from the rock in Kadesh, Aaron shared in the unbelief which led to the exclusion of both Moses and Aaron from the promised land. If our priesthood be not the sacrificing of bulls and of goats it is none the less a real priesthood, because the Lord Jesus Christ confers it upon us. Aaron's was a typical priesthood. Ours comes from the Great High Priest in heaven, who says to us, "As my Father hath sent me, even so I send you." But does this gift make us arrogant? Does it not rather humble us in the dust? The more our priesthood is connected with the Word of Him who cannot lie, the higher it is above the ancient sacrifices of the Mosaic rites, the more true and real and awful it becomes, and the more holy we

ought to be. If our office be far nobler than the hire of the people for a morsel of bread; if we seek to please God rather than man; if we await the judgment of our Master, whose word "pierces us even to the dividing of soul and spirit, and discovering the thoughts and intents of the heart," what manner of persons ought we to be? What integrity, what diligence, what faithfulness, what serious study, what nobleness of purpose, what loyalty to the Church, what discretion, what deadness to the world, what weighing of the Scripture, what "ripeness and perfectness" of age in Christ, what watchfulness in prayer, what patience and humility, what courage and steadfastness—that care for every soul committed to our charge should we continually show. Surely the time of a Bishop's visitation should be a time of close reckoning with ourselves! How imperfectly have we fulfilled our ministry! What shortcomings are there in all our services! In the forty-second year of my Episcopate, no less than fifty of the clergy have been called to their account. As I cast my eye sorrowfully over this number, and wonder at God's sparing mercy to myself, I shudder at the thought that I may prove wanting in that zeal, steadfastness, courage and humility which make me an example to you who still remain amongst us.

"The priest's lips should keep knowledge." Earnestness and integrity of purpose are great gifts, but the present critical age demands more of us. The knowledge which the priest's lips should dispense is of wider range, and of various kinds. In former days, poor and ignorant people took for granted all that their pastor said, and made no further inquiry. He must know what was right. They were simple and confiding. That was enough. But it is not so now. Everything is called in question, and the whole world is turned loose to inquire, to agitate, to debate, to applaud or to condemn. What chance has the simple minded clergyman who merely reads his chapter without thought, and performs his office without knowing the history of the Prayer Book and what is essential to a right understanding of it? The priest's knowledge should above all be Bible knowledge, for this is the point in which so many of his hearers are deficient, and this involves constant labor and the most diligent inquiry. It is easy to select scraps of the English version and quote them authoritatively on all occasions. But if we consider how the Bible is constructed, what knowledge is required of history, of the gradual education of

mankind, of successive eras of progress, of the Levitical ritual, of the fulfilment of prophecy in the birth and ministry of Jesus Christ, of the foundation, laws and progress of the Christian Church, of the development of Christian doctrine in the letters of the Apostles, of the history of the Jewish nation since the destruction of the Temple, we must see that no small task lies before us.

The priest's lips should keep knowledge! How careful should we be that in answering the objections of the scoffer we do not insist on unwise and traditional interpretations of Holy Scripture which the text does not contain. How sparing should we be of attempting to lay down a scheme of future events instead of stating clearly the fulfilment of the past. What deep knowledge is required in explaining the history and unfolding the meaning of these ancient creeds, whose root is in the Scripture, whose accuracy of definition was obtained by men deeply learned in Bible truth, who were not only defenders of the faith, but sufferers on account of their maintenance of it. Nor is the knowledge of the foundation and progress of the Church less necessary when our portion in the Catholic faith is denied by some, and the continuance of the Church both before and after the Reformation is set at nought by others. Happily, the greater the difficulty of acquiring such knowledge the more abundantly are we supplied with commentators of orthodox principles and extensive learning. And every year books multiply on us which illustrate some separate portion of Holy Writ, and throw light on its acknowledged difficulties. Among our numerous benefactors of this kind must be specially enshrined in our remembrance the honored name of the late venerable Bishop of Lincoln, whose deep and extensive knowledge of the Holy Scriptures and of the works of the primitive fathers, and whose unswerving loyalty to the Church is a safe guide to studious clergy; whilst his unsparing liberality has enabled us to enjoy the benefit of his labors at one-half the price which we should otherwise have paid. Such knowledge is indeed a possession forever, a treasure which in this new country we could not otherwise secure, for which no gratitude of ours can be too great, no love can be too fervent.

I am very unwilling to detain you longer, but you will not think me tedious if I add a few words of advice on some important points. First, on the duty of those in whose hands the power of electing rectors to parishes is vested, and on the duty of the clergy in respect

of testimonials which they give to persons who are desirous of obtaining a benefice. The law appears to impose checks on all the parties who are interested in this important matter. The laity have a large power entrusted to them, and the law very properly provides that it should not be autocratic and absolutely beyond control. The persons elected must be in priest's orders, without which they cannot, according to the rites of the Church of England, administer Holy Communion in the Church, or in the chamber of the sick and dying; and they must have the Bishop's license, which is a security to the laity that the Bishop has obtained proper and sufficient testimonials from those who are competent to give them, of soberness, piety, and honesty; and this during personal acquaintance for a period of three years. Similar testimonials are required by the heads of respectable firms before they will admit a young man into their employment. A check is likewise imposed on the clergy. For if they give careless testimonials out of mere good nature (as it is termed), they wilfully impose upon the Bishop, and testify to what they might know on enquiry to be untrue, and that by a most solemn attestation to which in writing they have voluntarily set their hands. A check is also imposed upon the Bishop. For if he institute and issue his mandate for induction without sufficient testimonials from the clergy, in respect of personal knowledge for the required time, and from the Bishop of another Diocese (if the person to be elected come from another), then he violates the order of the Church, injures the clergy and laity who are placed under his protection, and subjects himself to ecclesiastical censure. And the laity are equally wrong if they persist in electing a person who is not in priest's orders, or who has no testimonials or insufficient testimonials. And they are fighting against their own interests, for testimonials are required as their security against the intrusion of unfit persons. And it is not unreasonable to suppose that the Bishop, who has familiar intercourse with the clergy, may have opportunities of knowing which the laity have not. And it is most desirable on all accounts that the laity and the Bishop should be satisfied as to the election.

Secondly—on Confirmation. It is no doubt a great benefit to parishes to have this holy rite administered frequently. But it should not be overlooked that there is as much if not more need for watchfulness after Confirmation is over than during the preparation for it. The minds of the young are open to every kind of impression,

and when the first fit of earnestness has spent itself, if the priest be not watchful to strengthen the good impression which was made, there may be a speedy declension from the promise of early piety, or a disposition to seek assistance elsewhere. For this reason Bible classes or Communicants' classes are needed after Confirmation; and the clergy must not suppose that their work is ended when there are no more to be confirmed at that special time. The young require clear and definite teaching, lessons of reverence in regard to the service of Holy Communion, which, if they do not get from us, they will learn nowhere else. We must not take it for granted that they have all they ought to know on such matters. It is highly probable that no definite instruction has ever been given them by their parents on the fundamental doctrines of their religion.

Next, I would speak on the Marriage Service. I know of no more solemn rite in the whole Prayer Book than this. The symbolism of the rite taught us by St. Paul; the solemn appeal to "the dreadful day of judgment, when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed;" the certainty that "those who are coupled together otherwise than God's Word doth allow are not joined together by God," and even if their matrimony be legal, it is not in God's sight lawful; the solemn espousal "till death do us part;" the three-fold blessing; the prayer that they may "live together in holy love unto their lives' end"—these repeated cautions and warnings and blessings invest this rite with a significance and seriousness unsurpassed. And yet, where is there a rite more irreverently handled? I do not speak of the baser sin that is sometimes committed before marriage, but of the frivolousness with which matrimony is undertaken. The absence of religious feeling, especially of religious unity; legality made the sole measure of lawfulness; the money-making business which often forms the chief desire for union; the hasty performing of the rite in a house, where the prayers seem unsuitable, the blessings unfit, where the whole wish is to make the service as short as possible; or if it be fashionable to go to Church, the crowd of irreverent gazers, bent on nothing but criticism on the dress of those who are appealing to God for His sanction and His blessing—when all these signs of frivolity are manifest, who can wonder that the rules and prohibitions of the Church are trampled under foot? that bonds so lightly made are as lightly regarded, and that in a neighboring country (as stated on high authority) one in ten of every

family is said to have had a divorcee, and in some cases two or three divorcees; so that mutual respect and family love have been broken up again and again. What kind of children must such disunions produce? A heathen poet who lived in a loose age will tell us—

*Ætas parentum, pejor avis, tulit
Nos nequiores mox daturos
Progeniem vitiosorem.*

I thank God we have not got so low as this. But we should fear lest one step further should lead us to a point from which we cannot go back.

The clergy, then, will do well to refuse to sanction unions prohibited by their own Church laws, and to exhort and persuade their parishioners to have marriages celebrated in the most reverent way; and further, which is probably the more difficult task, to persuade them not to contract marriages where there is no bond of religious union, more especially where it is almost certain that the validity of our orders and Holy Sacraments will be denied. Or, they will have to submit to being re-baptized, re-confirmed, and then deprived, as they most richly deserve, of one essential part of the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's body and blood. If you think highly of holy matrimony you will endeavor to counteract such evils as opportunity may be afforded you.

It only remains for me now to thank you for the many marks of your respect and confidence which have been shown to me on several occasions. A Bishop can only be useful when he acts, not as an autocrat over his clergy, but as their fellow-laborer, in concert with them in the duties of their common calling; and in the exercise of his ministry, the Church of God from the earliest days has committed to his care functions in which priests take a subordinate part. The clergy will readily acknowledge that these spiritual powers have been entrusted to him for the strength and protection of the whole body of the faithful, according to the wise rules which the Church herself imposes.

A Bishop is as much restrained as a priest in matters of the highest moment by the creeds which are the bulwarks of our faith, and by the definite and clear interpretation of Holy Scriptures, which our offices severally contain. As long as we abide by these landmarks there must be a substantial and visible union amongst us, greater than the mere opinions of any single member or officer of the

Church. It were to be desired that we should see eye to eye in all things; and that there should be no division, even of opinion, but that we should be "perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." But as this is not to be expected, and some points, either of ritual or of speculative theology, will probably always remain open to discussion, our best security is that charitable construction of the actions and motives of others which each man unquestionably desires to be practised towards himself. In these respects the Church of England occupies the peculiar position of being more tolerant and comprehensive than any other religious body with which we are acquainted; and while there is a considerable diversity as to the means by which reverence is promoted, the Church inflexibly holds fast to primitive doctrine, primitive order, and practical piety. So that whilst there has been in the last fifty years a peaceful revolution in matters not absolutely fundamental, and in the aspect in which certain theological opinions are presented to the mind, and multitudes see no evil whatever in what they formerly looked upon with distaste, or even with horror, the Church has not departed one iota from the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, and at the same time she has been everywhere stirred up to greater and more earnest efforts in reclaiming the fallen, in searching for the wandering, and in promoting every design which tends to the practice of reverence and love.

It has ever been my earnest desire and prayer to act on such principles; and if in the prosecution of these I have seemed to any of you to exceed the bounds of a sober judgment, I trust that you will understand that I have not acted without much weighing of the subject in all its parts. As Bishop of the Diocese I only claim what seems to me to be an essential part of the Episcopal office: to mediate between conflicting opinions and to give complete toleration and support to all that may fairly be considered as within the limits of the Church in the Province of New Brunswick. A narrower line than this does not commend itself to my judgment; and I am ready to bear patiently whatever amount of censure may be thrown upon me for having adopted it. More than this I need not say; less could hardly be said by one who has the courage of his convictions, and who desires to embrace in the circle of his charity and his prayers schools of thought which differ and methods of action which vary, but which are consistent with the hearty love for the ark which contains us all. Brethren, the grace of God be with your spirit. AMEN.

